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ABSTRACT

During the academic year of 1978-1979, a system for the early identification of students who were likely to have difficulty with the core curriculum in language and/or mathematics was introduced into the London, Canada, system at the kindergarten and grade 1 levels. In the two subsequent years the early identification system was extended to grades 2 and 3. This report briefly outlines the general findings resulting from the identification process and summarizes the results of several studies which have attempted to assess its concurrent and predictive validity. It is suggested that the system is working fairly well and that a satisfactory degree of concurrent and predictive validity exists. (MP)

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EARLY IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, 1979 TO 1982

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Research Report 82-08

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EARLY IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM:
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, 1979 TO 1982

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Educational Research Services
London Board of Education

During the academic year 1978-79, after some preliminary pilot studies, a system for the early identification (EID) of students who were likely to have difficulty with the core curriculum in language and/or mathematics (Stennett & Isaacs, 1978) was introduced into the London system at the kindergarten and grade 1 levels. In the two subsequent years the EID system was extended to grades 2 and 3.

The basic intent of the EID system, which relies very heavily on classroom teacher and school team judgments,[1] is to ensure that the progress of each child is reviewed systematically during each of the primary grades. This system is supplemented by the school registration process, examinations by the school nurses and an examination during kindergarten by the speech and language teachers. The EID process is, of course, merely a means to an end...that of ensuring that each pupil who requires special attention or programming receives it.

The purpose of this report is simply to describe the general findings from the EID process and summarize the results of several studies which have attempted to assess its concurrent and predictive validity.

General Findings

Using the number of students to whom school teams give EID ratings of '2' or '3' as a measure of the incidence of difficulty primary students are having with the core curriculum in language/reading and mathematics, the following trends are evident:

(1) Overall, about one in four primary students (24%) is having difficulty with language/reading and about one in five (18%) is having problems with mathematics.

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[1] EID ratings, made by classroom teachers and school teams separately for language/reading and mathematics, consist of a simple scale, as follows:
0 = insufficient contact with student to make a judgment
1 = student will be ready, by the end of the school year, for the work of the next school year
2 = student *may not be ready*, by the end of the school year, for the work of the next school year
3 = it is *quite certain* that the student *will not be ready*, by the end of the school year, for the work of the next school year.

(2) Relatively more students in grade one (27%) are having difficulty with reading than students in the other primary grades (22-25%).

(3) Relatively more students in grade one (22%) are having difficulty with mathematics than students in the other primary grades (16-17%).

(4) The percentage of students having difficulty varies considerably across administrative areas...from 13 to 24% in mathematics and from 19 to 33% in reading.

(5) There is an even greater variability in the number of students having difficulty across both schools and classes.

(6) Three-year followups of the students who were enrolled in kindergarten and grade 1 during 1978-79 indicate that almost one quarter of them (23.3%) have left the system.

(7) Only about 6 of 10 students remain in the same elementary school during the primary years; almost 10% are enrolled in 3 or 4 different schools during that period.

Concurrent Validity

The concurrent validity of the EID ratings is determined by examining the extent to which they correlate with other measures or facts known about the students at or near the time the ratings are made. The following relationships all tend to serve as evidence of the concurrent validity of the EID ratings:

(1) Students who obtain EID ratings of 2 or 3 are much more likely to be on the speech and language teachers' caseloads.

(2) Students who receive EID ratings of 2 or 3 are more likely to be overage for grade.

(3) Boys and students born late in the year are more likely to be rated 2 or 3.

(4) Myklebust ratings of students' development are less favourable for students rated 2 or 3.

(5) There is a high correlation between the number of students rated 2 or 3 in a school and the need for Learning Resource Teachers as assessed by the Resource Allocation Formula (based on objective indicators such as student mobility, standardized test results, etc.)

Predictive Validity

The predictive validity of the EID ratings is determined by assessing how closely such ratings are related to subsequent student status or

performance. The following relationships all tend to support the predictive validity of the EID ratings:

(1) There is considerable consistency in the incidence and patterning of the various ratings (across grades, schools and areas) from year to year.

(2) There are moderate correlations between the ratings for the same students from year to year.

(3) Students given EID ratings of 2 or 3 in one year are more likely to be put in a low stream, repeat a grade or be placed in a special class the following year.

(4) EID ratings made in January correlate fairly well with students' scores on tests of core mathematics skills taken in June.

(5) EID ratings in grade 1 correlate quite well with students' scores on standardized tests of achievement and ability taken in grade 4.

SUMMARY

It seems clear from the research findings that the Early Identification system is working fairly well. Findings to date indicate that it has a satisfactory degree of concurrent and predictive validity and, in these respects, it compares well with more elaborate systems. However, as is the case with all such systems, further improvements and refinements can and should be made.

It should be recognized that in a summary report it is not possible to include all of the detailed findings that have been produced over the past three years. Those readers wishing more detail should consult the ten references listed.

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